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U of O won't ban CIA

Olum says 'university must be open place'

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Of The Register-Guard

Despite strong urgings from some students, University of Oregon President Paul Olum said Thursday he will not ban the CIA — or any other legal organization, for that matter — from recruiting students on campus.

"I feel very strongly the university must be an open place — the university does not make the decision of who has truth and who doesn't," Olum said during a 1½-hour informal meeting with about 75 students.

"If we start to say who is good and who is bad, who will be the arbiter? I don't want to decide it. I don't know who's going to be in charge of legislating morality for us."

CIA recruiting was among many issues — including campus parking, public safety, smoking areas, affirmative action and computer preregistration — addressed by Olum and by other administrators at the meeting.

Since he became university president in 1980, Olum has met with students once or twice each year in similar forums to discuss issues of special concern to students.

The CIA recruiting issue has been in the minds of many students because CIA recruiters had planned to visit the university on Tuesday but canceled the visit because not enough students signed up for interviews.

Although CIA recruiters didn't show up, a group calling themselves Students for Ethics in Government staged a "people's tribunal" on Tuesday to protest allowing representatives of the agency to come to the campus. About 300 students took part in the

protest, deciding at the end that the CIA was guilty of violating a number of American and international laws.

David Herman, a U of O senior who belongs to the ad hoc student group, asked Olum to cut off university contacts with the CIA because "it's been well documented the CIA has committed numerous crimes." He asked whether the university would permit the Mafia or other terrorist organizations to recruit on campus.

"We will allow any organization that had a regular job program and wanted to come to campus — and were legal — to do so," Olum said. "I don't believe the Mafia could come in and say, 'We need a few good hit men.' But are you prepared to say our students shouldn't take a job with the CIA or the military if it's a job they want to take?"

In the long run, Olum said people who seek to impose their morals on others will be the losers.

"The issue is so critical — we can't decide who's good or bad because it would ultimately come back to hurt us most," he said.

However, he encouraged students to protest if they oppose an organization's views or politics.

"You ought to demonstrate, pass out pamphlets, picket, protest, argue, state your position, object," Olum said. "Our best hope is to stand with the tradition of openness to everyone. I feel this particularly strongly."

Several students raised objections to the university's plans to transform temporarily the U of O's Alder Street tennis courts into a parking lot.